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TAGS: [CN](#) [OREP](#) [OVIP](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [VM](#)
SUBJECT: CODEL CHAMBLISS ENGAGES VIETNAM'S LEADERSHIP,
MILITARY AND PARLIAMENT

REF: A. HANOI 1593

[1](#)B. HANOI 1564
[1](#)C. HANOI 1485

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Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Jon Aloisi for Reasons 1.4 (B),
(C), and (D)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) A bipartisan United States Senate delegation led by Senator Saxby Chambliss of Georgia held meetings in Hanoi August 29 with senior GVN leaders, including SRV President Nguyen Minh Triet, the Vice-Chairman of Vietnam's parliament, and Vice-Ministers of Defense and Public Security. The meetings were frank and open, and the CODEL was received warmly. President Triet and Defense Vice-Minister Hieu assured the delegation of a full accounting and cooperation on Americans still missing from the War, while appealing for continued USG cooperation on Vietnamese MIA and assistance for "Agent Orange" detoxification and the disabled. Ministry of Public Security (MPS) Vice-Minister Huong praised increased bilateral cooperation on counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics, while National Assembly Vice-Chairman Luu highlighted the parliament's steps towards greater transparency and democracy and its expanding role in combating government corruption. President Triet pledged the GVN's cooperation on securing a New Embassy Compound (NEC) for Embassy Hanoi. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Accompanying Senator Chambliss were Senate Select Committee on Intelligence colleagues Senator Richard Burr of North Carolina and Senator William Nelson of Florida; Senator John Thune of South Dakota, representing the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi, representing the Senate Appropriations Committee.

TRJET: MIA ISSUE "HUMANITARIAN," WE WILL COOPERATE FULLY

[1](#)3. (C) In a one-hour August 29 meeting with GVN State President Nguyen Minh Triet, the Senators expressed appreciation for improved GVN cooperation in areas of intelligence, military relations and trade. President Triet welcomed the congressional delegation (CODEL), telling the Senators and accompanying staff members, the bilateral relationship had improved significantly. Triet noted differences on policy issues, but said he hoped we could overcome those through more frank and open discussions and improved mutual understanding.

[1](#)4. (C) Senator Chambliss thanked President Triet for the GVN's cooperation in MIA recovery efforts, citing the many closures the GVN had given concerned American families, but raised concern about the possibility of additional information on MIA cases being withheld. He emphasized that he wanted MIA information, from both governments, to be shared as completely as possible. Triet assured the Senator that the GVN considered MIA issues as humanitarian and wanted to cooperate as fully as possible. He also requested the USG share more information to assist in cases of missing Vietnamese from the War.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Chambliss raised with the President the need for a New U.S. Embassy Compound (NEC) (Ref. B) in Hanoi to better reflect our growing bilateral relationship. Triet agreed a NEC was needed and assured the Senator the GVN was working to

resolve final "minor technical issues" to move forward with a property lease.

16. (C) Senator Nelson cited his military service during the Vietnam War and told the President it was a privilege to return as friends. Senator Burr expressed appreciation for the GVN's cooperation on the war on terrorism, counter-narcotics, and nuclear non-proliferation, stating he was glad the GVN saw these as global rather than bilateral issues. Senator Thune welcomed the GVN to the WTO and expressed hope that both countries would benefit from Vietnam's membership. He added that he came from an agricultural state that hoped to increase its agricultural

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exports to countries like Vietnam.

17. (C) President Triet emphasized to the Senators that Vietnam took transnational crime seriously, and wanted peace and stability for its people and the region. He suggested that our two governments join forces on global and regional issues. He said that Vietnam "remained a poor country" and the GVN's focus would remain on economic development, in the near-term. He added that our relationship should not be held hostage by any one issue, in reference to a comment on human rights.

CHAMBLISS RAISES "AGGRESSIVE CHINA" WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

18. (C) In an August 29 tour and meeting at Vietnam's National Assembly (NA), Senator Chambliss told NA Vice-Chairman Uong Chu Luu that the U.S. Congress saw positive progress in Vietnam in areas of counter-terrorism, military relations, bilateral trade and U.S. investment. Senator Chambliss raised with Luu the issue of how Vietnam will deal with an "aggressive China" to the North. Luu characterized China as Vietnam's "big neighbor," and that the NA's goal with China were stability and economic development, as Vietnam also hoped to enjoy China's level of economic growth. Luu noted China's concern with Vietnam's growing relations with the United States, but said the NA was very pleased with its developing relations with the USG, particularly in trade. Luu also noted positive bilateral cooperation on counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, transnational crime, HIV/AIDS and humanitarian assistance. He specifically thanked the U.S. Congress for approving \$59 million in HIV/AIDS program funds (PEPFAR) and \$3 million for "detoxification" ("Agent Orange" remediation).

19. (C) Senator Nelson encouraged Vice-Chairman Luu to make sure the NA's voice was heard in government decision-making, and further to make sure that voice represented the many peoples of Vietnam. Luu responded that the NA was trying to improve its oversight function and budgetary control. He said NA delegates were frank and open when reviewing GVN program performance. NA Foreign Affairs Committee Director Hong told the Senators that transparency and democracy were improving in Vietnam, citing the increased use of on-line chats and public forums and recently increased NA authority to question the Prime Minister. Luu added that some of the hot button issues for the NA right now included anti-corruption, food safety, road safety and pandemic flu prevention.

110. (C) Vice-Chairman Luu said the U.S. House of Representatives bill on human rights, sponsored by Congressman Chris Smith, would be a detriment to our growing, positive relationship and current trends. Luu appealed for U.S. lawmakers to understand that Vietnam had been through long wars and was doing its best to ensure human rights. Chambliss told Luu he was impressed by Vietnam's growing transparency and hoped that this would lead to a greater foundation for human rights and democracy.

MINISTRY OF DEFENSE: MANY MORE MIA's OF THEIR OWN

111. (C) Senator Chambliss, after expressing thanks to GVN Vice-Minister of Defense Nguyen Huy Hieu for the great cooperation to date, told the Defense Vice-Minister that the United States still had 1,362 Americans missing from the War, and wanted to account for them as fully as possible. He told the Vice-Minister that we hope to have access to GVN archival information before planned early October joint military exercises. Hieu assured the Senator the GVN MOD makes all efforts to recover MIAs and made the delegation aware that the GVN was still trying to account for over 300,000 war missing of its own. He thanked the delegation for 180 CD-ROMS of data provided by DOD and noted that the MOD had recently agreed to allow DOD to conduct search operations in GVN waters. Senator Chambliss suggested that

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a "new set of eyes" review GVN archives, adding that the USG had done similar re-reviews with much success in uncovering additional information.

¶12. (C) Senator Thune thanked the MOD for its cooperation to date and asked for help on nuclear non-proliferation, North Korea and providing balance to China's influence in the region, citing Vietnam's increasingly important role in the region. On nuclear issues and WMD, Hieu noted that there had been more cooperation since WTO membership, and he expected this cooperation to increase. Hieu said China was its traditional, friendly neighbor with whom the GVN sought future cooperation and long-term stability. He said MOD was working actively with China on land border and South China Sea disputes, adding that the GVN had agreed to negotiate with China on a basis of equality and mutual respect to resolve these issues.

PLEA FOR MORE "AGENT ORANGE" ASSISTANCE

¶13. (C) Senator Chambliss asked about other areas of USG-GVN cooperation and potential USG assistance. Hieu raised de-mining and unexploded ordnance (UXO), military medicine, HIV/AIDS education and prevention programs under PEPFAR, and the training of Vietnamese military personnel to the United States. He noted recent discussions about the USG sale of spare parts for armored personnel carriers and helicopters, and hoped there would be more to follow. He also expressed MOD's appreciation for the U.S. Congress' recent funding of three million dollars for toxin remediation efforts in Vietnam. Hieu told the CODEL there was a high density of chemical deposits in the Danang area, and asserted that, overall, more than four million Vietnamese had been affected by such chemicals from the War. Hieu appealed for more USG assistance on Agent Orange remediation and for those "disabled by Agent Orange." He also asked for greater USG assistance on de-mining, claiming that "over 2,000" Vietnamese were killed every year by UXO.

MEETING WITH MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SECURITY

¶14. (C) In an August 29 meeting and subsequent luncheon with Ministry of Public Security Vice-Minister Nguyen Van Huong and his deputies, CODEL members discussed counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics cooperation. That meeting is being reported in separate channels.

¶15. (U) This cable was not cleared by the CODEL.

MICHALAK